

Message Text

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ORIGIN SS-25

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O R 160028Z AUG 75
FM SECSTATE WASHDC
TO AMEMBASSY JAKARTA IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY CANBERRA
INFO AMEMBASSY LISBON

S E C R E T STATE 194779

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PO, PT, ID, AS

SUBJECT: INDONESIA AND PORTUGUESE TIMOR

1. REPORTS OF CONFUSED SITUATION IN PORTUGUESE TIMOR HAVE ATTRACTED ATTENTION HERE, AND WE HAVE BEEN FOLLOWING DEVELOPMENTS CLOSELY. APPEARS THAT CHANCES OF INDONESIAN INTERVENTION ARE REAL AND COULD WELL BE PRECIPITATED BY FURTHER EVOLUTION OF THE SITUATION.

2. WE ARE ANXIOUS NOT TO BECOME INVOLVED IN PORTUGUESE TIMOR. APART FROM HUMANITARIAN CONCERN FOR WELFARE OF POPULACE AND THEIR RIGHT TO SELF-DETERMINATION, OUR ONLY SECRET

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INTEREST IN TERRITORY'S FUTURE LIES IN POSSIBLE IMPACT THAT A CHANGE IN ITS STATUS MIGHT HAVE ON OUR RELATIONS WITH JAKARTA.

3. TERRITORY'S FUTURE STATUS SHOULD BE LEFT TO THOSE WITH A DIRECT INTEREST IN TERRITORY: INHABITANTS OF TIMOR, PORTUGAL, INDONESIA, AND AUSTRALIA. LOGIC OF SITUATION SUGGESTS THAT EVENTUAL MERGER OF TERRITORY WITH INDONESIA WOULD PROBABLY BE SOLUTION BEST CALCULATED TO INSURE REGIONAL STABILITY AND, IN LONG RUN, WOULD PROBABLY PROVE MORE BENEFICIAL TO INHABITANTS OF TIMOR. SUCH DECISION, HOWEVER, IS NOT FOR US TO MAKE, AND WE ARE DETERMINED

NOT TO BECOME INVOLVED IN PROCESS.

4. SHOULD INDONESIANS DECIDE TO GO AHEAD AND OCCUPY TERRITORY BY FORCE, SEEMS APPARENT THAT PORTUGUESE FORCES WILL NOT OFFER SIGNIFICANT RESISTANCE AND THAT ARMED OPPOSITION COULD BE EXPECTED MAINLY FROM UDT SUPPORTERS (WHO SEEM TO BE IN POSITION OF POWER IN DILI) AND FROM FRETELIN PARTISANS NOW ENGAGED IN SKIRMISHING WITH UDT BUT WHO MIGHT JOIN LATTER TO RESIST INDONESIAN TAKE-OVER. GIVEN DISPARITY OF FORCES, WE ASSUME INDONESIANS COULD OCCUPY TERRITORY WITHOUT TOO MUCH TROUBLE APART FROM POSSIBILITY OF RESIDUAL GUERRILLA RESISTANCE IN INTERIOR. ANY SUCH INDONESIAN INITIATIVE WOULD HAVE SIGNIFICANT IMPACT IN AUSTRALIA, SEVERITY OF WHICH WOULD DEPEND ON DEGREE TO WHICH INDONESIAN MOVE SEEMED TO BE DISPLAY OF NAKED FORCE RATHER THAN RESPONSE TO PROVOCATION OR THREAT OF ANARCHY.

5. U.S. PUBLIC REACTION TO AN INDONESIAN TAKEOVER OF TIMOR WOULD BE SIMILAR TO THAT IN AUSTRALIA, ALTHOUGH MUTED BY LACK OF PUBLIC KNOWLEDGE OR INTEREST IN TIMOR. EXTENT AND NATURE OF US RESPONSE WOULD BE DETERMINED LARGELY BY CIRCUMSTANCES OF INDONESIAN MOVE. NON-VIOLENT OCCUPATION FOLLOWING AFTER PERIOD OF INTER-NECINE CONFLICT WITHIN TIMOR SHOULD PROVOKE LITTLE DISAPPROVAL. HOWEVER, IF US-SUPPLIED EQUIPMENT WERE USED IN A MANNER CONTRARY TO THE RESTRICTIVE PROVISIONS OF SECTIONS 502, 505(A) AND 505(D) OF FAA AND SECTIONS
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3(A), 3(C) AND 4 OF FMSA, WE WOULD BE OBLIGED TO TERMINATE ALL SECURITY ASSISTANCE. EVEN IF THIS WERE NOT SO, THOSE IN CONGRESS WHO NOW OPPOSE MILITARY AND ECONOMIC AID TO INDONESIA MIGHT WELL GAIN SUFFICIENT ADDITIONAL SUPPORT TO FORCE SERIOUS CURTAILMENT OR EVEN TERMINATION OF ALL OR AT LEAST MILITARY AID.

6. WE DO NOT INTEND TO INVOLVE OURSELVES IN TIMOR OR IN EFFORT TO PERSUADE OR DISSUADE GOI REGARDING ANY PARTICULAR COURSE OF ACTION IT MAY BE CONSIDERING. OUR ACTIONS AT THIS STAGE SHOULD BE CONFINED TO MAKING SURE THAT GOI HAS CORRECT UNDERSTANDING OF SECURITY ASSISTANCE RAMIFICATIONS.

7. FOR JAKARTA: WE REQUEST EMBASSY TO UNDERTAKE AN APPROACH AT A SUITABLE LEVEL DESIGNED TO INSURE THAT GOI LEADERSHIP UNDERSTANDS LEGAL AND CONGRESSIONAL PROBLEM THAT COULD ARISE IF THEY MOVED MILITARILY TO SEIZE TIMOR. IF AMBASSADOR FEELS IT MORE APPROPRIATE THAN RAISING MATTER AT HIGHER LEVEL, APPROACH MIGHT BE MADE BY DCM TO

RELATIVELY SENIOR GOI OFFICIALS WHO COULD BE COUNTED ON TO CONVEY INFORMATION ACCURATELY TO DECISION-MAKING LEVEL. WITHOUT SUGGESTING DETAILED TALKING POINTS, WE BELIEVE FOLLOWING THOUGHTS SHOULD BE CONVEYED TO GOI: (A) US INTERESTS ARE AS STATED IN PARA TWO ABOVE; USG WOULD HAVE NO OBJECTION TO MERGER OF PORTUGUESE TIMOR WITH INDONESIA, ASSUMING THIS DESIRED BY POPULACE; (B) WE BELIEVE ISSUE SHOULD BE DETERMINED BY INHABITANTS THEMSELVES AND BY TIMOR'S NEIGHBORS; (C) PEACEFUL MERGER WITH INDONESIA WOULD HAVE NO ADVERSE AFFECT IN U.S.; FORCEFUL SEIZURE, ON OTHER HAND, COULD RAISE DIFFICULT QUESTIONS OF KIND WE HAVE BEEN HAVING WITH TURKEY CONCERNING CONTINUATION OF MILITARY ASSISTANCE; (D) WE DO NOT WANT TO CREATE IMPRESSION THAT WE ARE ATTEMPTING TO PRESSURE GOI ON PORTUGUESE TIMOR; WE DO, HOWEVER, FEEL THAT GOI SHOULD BE AWARE OF THESE POTENTIAL PROBLEMS WHEN CONSIDERING ITS ACTIONS TOWARD TIMOR.

8. FOR CANBERRA: WE PROPOSE CONTINUING PRESENT SHARING OF INFORMATION AND ASSESSMENTS ON TIMOR AND INDONESIA'S
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INTENTIONS, WHILE MAKING SURE GOA UNDERSTANDS THAT WE DO NOT INTEND BECOME INVOLVED IN THE ISSUE. SUGGEST YOU INFORM AUSTRALIANS OF OUR APPROACH TO GOI. SISCO

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